



2026 ECTEN ECPAC webinar series

Emeritus Professor Kerryann Walsh

How can we best prepare students in initial teacher education to meet the challenges of child protection and safeguarding?

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for the real world®**





ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

QUT acknowledges the Turrbal and Yugara, as the First Nations owners of the lands where QUT now stands. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.



Today

1. Terminology
2. Global perspective
3. National principles for child safe organisations
4. 'What works' in child protection education?
 - Content and pedagogical strategies we can use with students in initial teacher education
5. Questions



Beginning with self care



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Some suggested scripts...

“Each of you here today comes with your own unique life experiences. Today we are going to be talking and thinking about [child maltreatment]. This can be a painful issue to learn about and why this is the case will become clearer when I present some details in a moment. You may be surprised at your feelings and reactions to some material. Be aware and hold firm. These reactions are markers of our humanity. Children — the children we serve, our own children, our childhood selves — deserve for all of us to be well informed and to be prepared to help where we can. We can make a difference in children's lives by acting ethically, professionally, and in accordance with the law in these circumstances. I encourage you to take care while you participate today of yourself and others, and if you need to take a break, please do so. There are a list of specialist support services at the end of this presentation.”

“Child [victimisation] can be a challenging issue to read, think, and learn about. You may be surprised at your reactions to some material [in this lecture]. You may feel discomfort, shock, sadness, anger or disgust. You may even feel numb or confused. The children in our care deserve for us to be well informed about [child abuse and neglect] and to be prepared to help where we can. We can make a difference in children's lives by acting ethically, professionally, and in accordance with the law in these circumstances. Take care while you participate in this lecture and be aware of your fellow students too. Helpful resources are provided at the end of this presentation. This is important learning. You are going to need it.”

Terminology

Terminology

What happens to children

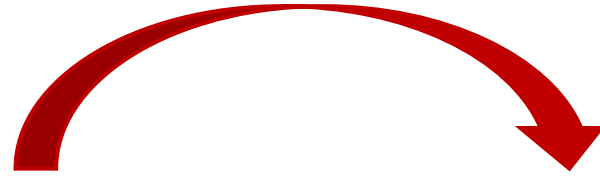
- Child abuse and neglect
- Child maltreatment – child sexual abuse, physical abuse, emotional (or psychological abuse), neglect, exposure to domestic and family violence

What we do

- Child protection
- Child safeguarding

The ultimate goal

- Child safety

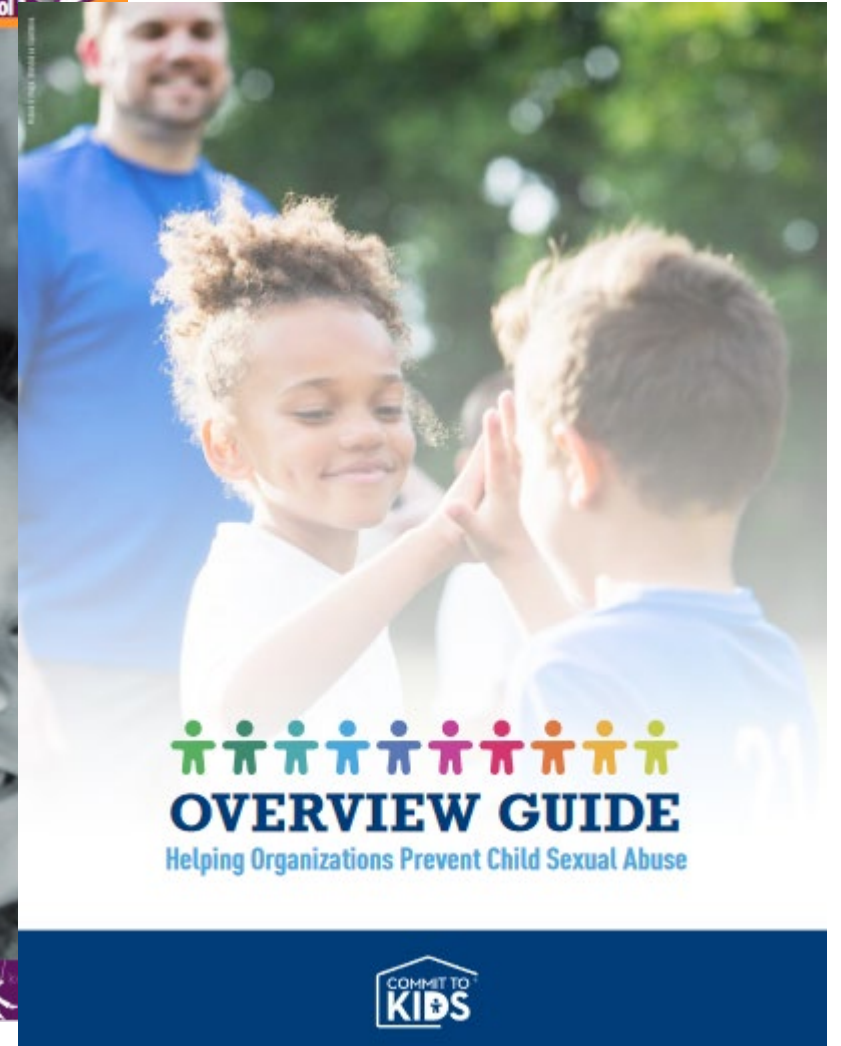


Global problem



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National Principles for Child Safe Organisations



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Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference

Creating Safe Environments For Children - Organisations, Employees and Volunteers

National Framework

Schedule: Guidelines for Building the Capacity of Child-Safe Organisations

Overview

Objective: to identify nationally agreed characteristics of a child-safe organisation and promote best practice which takes account of the diverse range of community services.

A Schedule for building the capacity of organisations to maintain child-safe environments is part of a developmental process which effectively links with a commitment to quality improvement. This means that organisations can remain engaged with these guidelines rather than view child safety as a set of expectations to be met once and for ever.

Elements within this Schedule can be understood as benchmarks which organisations will seek to achieve and reference points against which organisations can assess their child-safe capacity. The strategies are not exhaustive but represent nationally agreed good practice to guide organisational development. The connecting theme is the identification of practices which have been found effective in establishing, maintaining and strengthening the child-safe capacity of organisations.

The Schedule takes into account the scope of community services, encompassing large government organisations and non government organisations with substantial infrastructure; organisations which rely upon volunteers for their survival; and private (for profit) providers. The governance of some organisations resides with management committees and advisory bodies whose members are volunteers and therefore included within the scope of the Schedule.

The Schedule does not state precisely what organisations should do to protect children in every situation or prescribe a series of procedures which must be followed. The precise strategies and methods ('the how to') which organisations adopt are likely to be service specific, reflecting variations in the nature of activities, organisational structure and resources, and differences between jurisdictions.

Community services organisations work with children who are vulnerable in many different ways. Their vulnerable status as children may be compounded because they are an Australian Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, have a disability, or have experienced homelessness or abuse. Other circumstances or experiences may be significant although less visible. As part of building capacity for child safety, organisations need to take account of the nature of vulnerability experienced by children who come into contact with their service.

The responsibility for implementation of this Schedule resides with each of the States and Territories and will rely upon guidance and strategies which take account of local circumstances. Implementation approaches will be tailored to build upon existing initiatives and respond to identified needs and priorities within the community services sector in each jurisdiction.

Foundation practices and strategies are identified in the Schedule, acknowledging that capacity for a child-safe organisation is built up over time. Enhanced practices and strategies will be influenced by risk assessment and other factors specific to an organisation or jurisdiction.

The intention is to encourage and support organisations to engage in a process of continuous improvement towards enhanced levels of child safety. The quality assurance and quality improvement methods which governments adopt will be determined with consideration to existing programs and mechanisms for ensuring that organisations are aware of, and able to fulfil, their responsibilities.

Risk Assessment and Decision-making

For or exclusion of persons in areas

es and volunteers is one important measure within the suite of services organisations need to make recruitment decisions for their care or involved with the services or programs they provide. Protection for the wellbeing of children and their protection from whether certain persons pose a risk to children.

Information concerning potential employees and volunteers to assist with recruitment and procedural fairness demand that there is a rationale for decisions made by organisations must be accountable for the decisions they make, provide clear foundations for decision-making.

Information on background checking of employees and volunteers, legislation, policy and practice across Australia. The Schedule provides information on making or to prescribe particular assessment processes and key elements to promote risk assessment and

reference to the systems for background checking and information on making or to prescribe particular assessment processes and key elements to promote risk assessment and

minimising the likelihood that a person who may pose a risk to children. These guidelines will assist in that process and can be drawn upon for application of the guidelines at the local level resides

background checking and risk assessment purposes will be the same. These guidelines will assist in that process and can be drawn upon for application of the guidelines at the local level resides

the commitments of the *Creating Safe Environments* for Children - Organisations, Employees and Volunteers Ministers in July 2005. It should be read in conjunction with the multi-faceted approach to creating child-safe environments.



Principles for Child Safety in Organisations

endorsed by the following

Australian Children's Commissioners and Guardians (ACCG)

Barry Salmon, Acting Commissioner for Children and Young People and Child Guardian, Queensland
Howard Bath, Children's Commissioner, Northern Territory
Pam Simmons, Guardian for Children and Young People, South Australia
Elizabeth Daly, Acting Commissioner for Children, Tasmania
Bernie Geary, Principal Commissioner, Commission for Children and Young People, Victoria
Michelle Scott, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Western Australia
Kerryn Boland, Acting Children & Young People Commissioner, New South Wales
Alasdair Roy, Children & Young People Commissioner, Australian Capital Territory

Notes

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- Establishing pathways and mechanisms which enable them to raise concerns safely, with confidence, and
- using inclusive and empowering, child-friendly language in everyday activity and relevant written documents.

Background

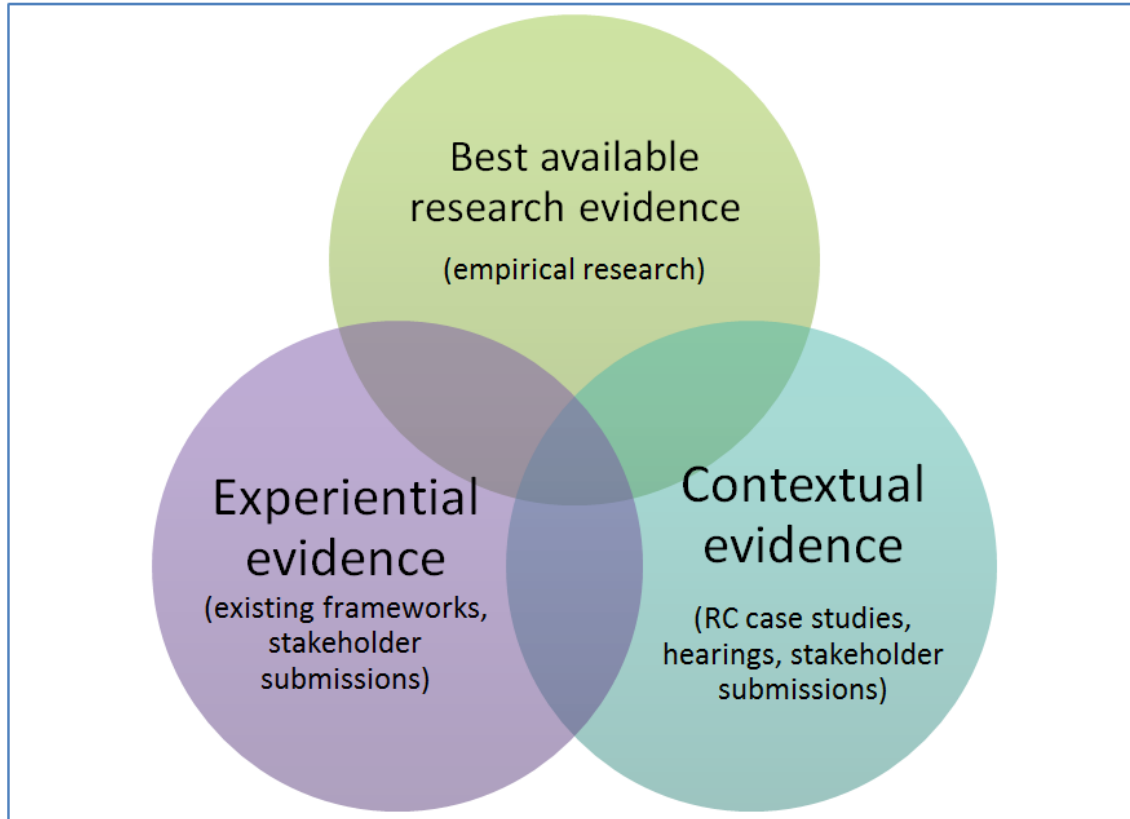
Parliamentary Inquiry into the Handling of Child Abuse by Religious and other Non-Government Organisations (Victoria Parliament Family and Community Development Committee, 2013)



Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (Commonwealth of Australia, 2017).



National Principles for Child Safe Organisations



Identify and synthesise relevant evidence

Formulate a set of key elements of child safe organisations that could be tested with stakeholders and via a policy consultation process

Refine the key elements into a set of principles

Evidence source/type	Guiding questions
Australian frameworks	What are the key elements in CSOs? Where is the activity concentrated?
International frameworks	What are the key elements in CSOs?
Empirical literature (evaluation)	What evaluations of CSO initiatives have been conducted to date?
Empirical literature (CSA & CSOs)	What does the literature say should be the key elements of CSOs?
RC Case Studies	What are the lessons from RC Case Studies regarding what should be the characteristics/elements of CSOs
RC stakeholder submissions	What do stakeholders suggest should be the characteristics/elements of CSOs
RC research projects	What do findings of RC projects have to say about the characteristics of CSOs
Previous inquiries	What do previous inquiries say about the characteristics of CSOs?

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FINAL REPORT

Making institutions child safe



Royal Commission
into Institutional Responses
to Child Sexual Abuse

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Organisations
National Principles



What works?

- What are the characteristics of effective education and training?
- What education and training modes seem to produce better outcomes?
- How can we evaluate the education and training we provide?

Child protection training for professionals to improve reporting of child abuse and neglect (Review)

Walsh K, Eggin E, Hine L, Mathews B, Kenny MC, Howard S, Ayling N, Dallaston E, Pink E, Vagenas D

Walsh K, Eggin E, Hine L, Mathews B, Kenny MC, Howard S, Ayling N, Dallaston E, Pink E, Vagenas D.
Child protection training for professionals to improve reporting of child abuse and neglect.
Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2022, Issue 7. Art. No.: CD011775.
DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD011775.pub2.

www.cochranelibrary.com

Child protection training for professionals to improve reporting of child abuse and neglect (Review)
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Child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education: A systematic scoping review

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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:
Child protection
Child safeguarding
Teachers
Educators
Teacher education
Teacher preparation

ABSTRACT

To improve educational outcomes for maltreated children, there is an urgent need to strengthen the capacity of the education workforce to respond appropriately to their needs. We conducted a systematic scoping review to synthesize current evidence about child protection and safeguarding in initial (pre-registration) teacher education with the aim of developing a knowledge base, and understanding what we — as researchers, teacher educators, and professional accreditation bodies — can and should be doing better. Thirty-one studies (reported in 38 papers) met the inclusion criteria. Studies were coded inductively against standardised criteria and critically appraised. Coding of study aims yielded three themes forming a descriptive map of research in the field: (i) studies investigating student teachers' perceptions of their preparedness to deal with child protection and safeguarding (n = 15); (ii) studies investigating preparation for child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education courses (n = 14); and (iii) studies investigating student teachers' preferences for future training (n = 2). We identified key contents or topics covered, teaching methods and delivery modes, time allocations, and personnel involved in course delivery. Findings show that child protection and safeguarding are seldom investigated in initial teacher education, averaging only one published study per year over a 32-year search period with most studies having been conducted in Australia and the UK. Time allocated to child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education courses varied from 1 to 16 h. Content covered was limited to several core topics with primacy given to child maltreatment subtypes, indicators, and reporting duties. Delivery methods were dominated by lectures, workshops, and discussions. Few studies had investigated the efficacy of innovative and interactive teaching strategies or online learning. We conclude that child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education may be improved by leveraging off existing well-designed, rigorously evaluated programs, which have been found to be feasibly delivered and acceptable to future professionals.

1. Introduction and background

Child maltreatment is a form of violence against children that includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, and exposure to domestic and family violence. Child maltreatment is a serious and widespread problem for children in low-, middle-, and high-income countries in regions throughout the world with an estimated two-thirds of children exposed to violent discipline in the past year (e.g., Hillis, Mercy, Amobi, & Kress, 2016) with compounding effects during the global pandemic (Fabbri et al., 2021). Approximately one-quarter of female children have been exposed to sexual violence (Qu et al., 2022)

and more than one in ten children have experienced direct online sexual solicitation (Madigan et al., 2018). Children may experience any one or combination of maltreatment subtypes within their homes and families, care and education settings, justice institutions, workplaces, and communities (Pinheiro, 2006). Although the effects of child maltreatment vary according to the nature of the maltreatment, its frequency, seriousness, the relationships between perpetrator and child, and responses to children's disclosures, the cumulative impact of multiple exposures is typically more debilitating (Herrenkohl & Kilka, 2019; Jonson-Reid, Kohl, & Drake, 2012).

Children who have suffered maltreatment can experience disruption

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<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chidyouth.2023.106951>

Received 29 December 2022; Received in revised form 26 February 2023; Accepted 26 March 2023

Available online 30 March 2023

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Child protection training for professionals to improve reporting of child abuse and neglect

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Why this review was needed

- Child abuse and neglect results in significant costs for children, families, and communities.
- As a core public health strategy, many professional groups are required by law and policy in many jurisdictions to report suspected cases.
- Numerous different training initiatives appear to have been developed and implemented for professionals, but there is little evidence about their effectiveness in improving reporting of child abuse and neglect generally, for specific professions, and for distinct types of child abuse and neglect.
- To develop a clearer understanding of optimal training content and methods.
- Provide policymakers with a means by which to assess whether current training interventions are congruent with what is likely to be effective.

What we wanted to find out



- If child protection training improves professionals' reporting of child abuse and neglect
- What components of effective training help professionals to report child abuse and neglect
- If the training causes any unwanted effects.

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What we searched for

1. Only high-quality evaluation studies where participants were allocated to either an intervention or control group (e.g., randomized controlled trials)
2. Studies that involved qualified professionals typically required by law to report child abuse and/or neglect (teachers, nurse, doctors, police/law enforcement)
3. Child protection training initiatives aimed at improving reporting of child abuse and neglect



Outcomes

Number of reported cases

Quality of reported cases



Knowledge of reporting duty, processes, procedures

Knowledge of core concepts in child abuse and neglect

Skill in distinguishing cases that should be reported from those that should not

Attitudes towards the duty to report

What we found

- 11 studies (17 papers), 1484 participants (range 30-765)
- Only 3 studies in the past 10 years
- Countries: USA (9), Canada (1), Netherlands (1)
- Professionals: teachers (6), doctors (2), mental health professionals (1), childcare workers (1), nurses (1)
- 11 distinct programs evaluated

Outcomes

Number of reported cases



Quality of reported cases



Knowledge of reporting duty, processes, procedures



Knowledge of core concepts in child abuse and neglect



Skill in distinguishing cases that should be reported from those that should not



Attitudes towards the duty to report



Program contents & methods

Contents

Most

- Indicators of child abuse and neglect
- Definitions and types of child abuse and neglect
- reporting laws and policies
- how to make a report (procedures)
- Incidence or prevalence, or both
- Concerns, fears, myths, and misconceptions.

Fewer

- The science of child abuse and neglect (its characteristics and perpetrators)
- Responding to disclosures
- Community resources & referrals

Methods

Most

Presentations with group discussion
Films, videos (audiovisuals)
Modelling via observations of expert others
Experiential exercises
Role plays

Fewer

Case simulations – with modelling, opportunities for practice, and feedback on practice
Qs and As with experts
eLearning with interactive elements

Program duration, intensity, mode, facilitators

Duration & Intensity

- Shortest = 1 x 2-hour workshop
- Longest = 6 x 90-minute seminars over one month
- 3 studies = self-paced learning

Mode & Facilitators

- 8 studies F2F
- 3 studies interactive self-paced e-learning with clever features
- Specialist facilitators
- Content area experts
- Interdisciplinary teams

What training modes produce best outcomes?

- ILookOut for Child Abuse – training designed to develop cognitive (thinking) and affective (feeling) attributes for reporting. Activating empathy with the use of ‘point-of-view’ filming strategy.
- NextPage – training built around recognition, responding (action), and communicating. Interactive with modelling, rehearsal, practice, feedback, testing.
- Second Step Child Protection Unit – training for teachers taking a comprehensive ‘whole-of-school’ approach to prevention of child sexual abuse addressing multiple features of the school ecology (policies, procedures, staff training, student lessons, family education).

Way forward

- More evaluation studies
- With a wider range of professional groups (and interprofessional groups)
- Evaluations must use appropriate methods for allocating professionals to intervention and control groups, and use statistical methods to account for the delivery of training to professionals in workplace groups
- Evaluation studies must be conducted independently.

New studies

- Spain (n=773 child-serving professionals): Barnahus model (multidisciplinary, specialised training, reduce revictimization, improve quality of care). Increased knowledge about CSA, more positive attitudes, decreased adherence to myths, increased self-efficacy (confidence in professional performance) (Andreu & Pereda, 2026)
- Norway (n=1363 kindergarten educators): Train the trainer model. Increased knowledge about CM, improved confidence in responding to concerns, greater trust in child welfare system. No effect on workplace culture of openness and support. Effect diminished over time. Low implementation of package resources. Stronger effects for trainers (direct exposure) (Bang et al., 2025).
- Taiwan (n=47 emergency nurses): Course based on WHO handbook; iCAN chatbot trained on reporting scenarios to create simulations with embedded quizzes and create opportunities for practice. Increased knowledge of CAN, attitudes towards reporting, reporting intention (Kao et al., 2025)

Child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education: a systematic scoping review

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Why this review was needed

- To scope the breadth and depth of the research on child protection and safeguarding in initial teacher education.
- To identify what had already been done, assess the quality of what had already been done, summarise what the studies found, identify gaps, and propose what should happen next.
- No existing reviews of this type.

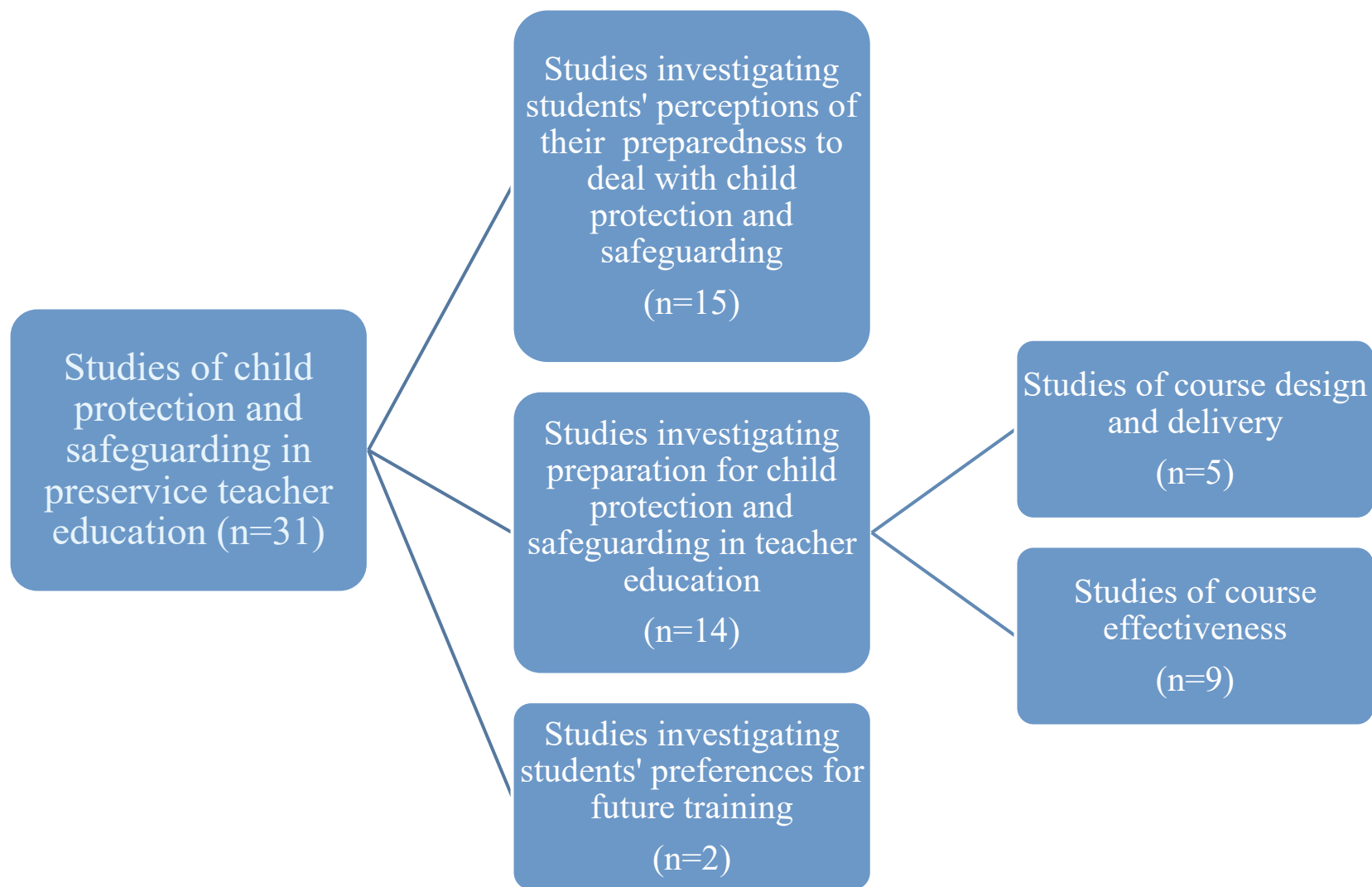
What we searched for

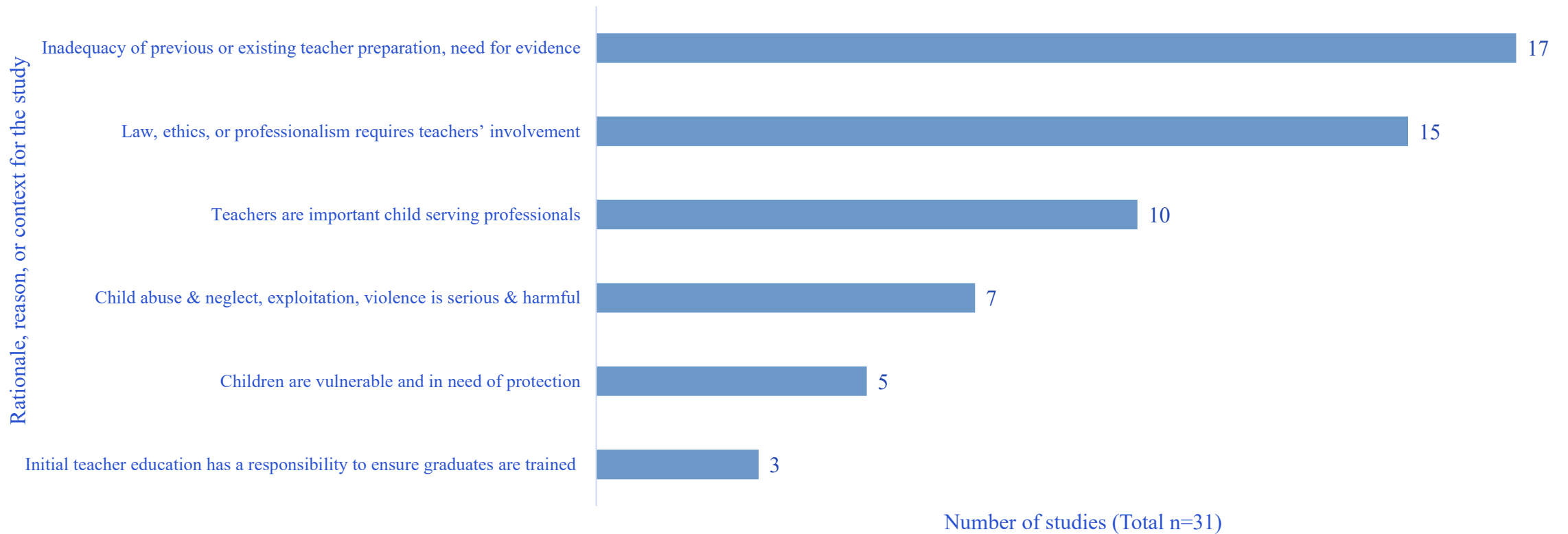
1. Published papers
2. Papers reporting studies where data had been collected with people or institutions (empirical studies).
3. Studies in which the data had been collected from students in initial teacher education courses (and all the terms used for this), teacher education staff (teacher educators, academics), teacher education institutions (universities etc).
4. Studies about education or training for child protection or safeguarding, dealing with child maltreatment (physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, exposure to domestic and family violence, child exploitation).



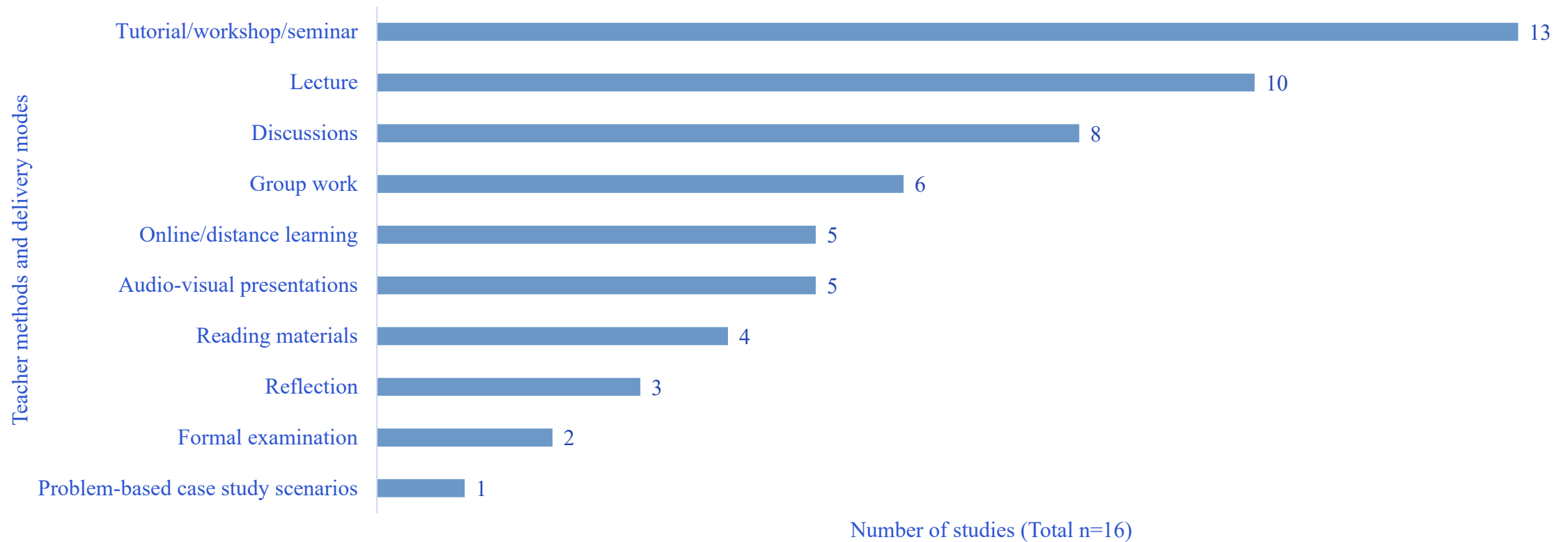
What we found

- 31 studies (38 papers) over 32 years (1.2 papers per year 1990-2022)
- Countries: Australia (14), UK (5), USA (4), Northern Ireland (2), Jordan (2), Turkey (2) Iraq (1) , and Spain (1)
- Sample sizes 19 – 387 participants
 - Students in initial teacher education programs (26 studies)
 - Staff in initial teacher education institutions (3 studies)
 - Both (2 studies)









What we suggested as a way forward

- Rather than continuing to advocate solely for further research to enhance the knowledge base, we suggest a shift to greater consultation with student teachers and teacher educators, and modelling evaluation on existing well-designed, rigorously evaluated programs (with other professionals), which have been found to be feasibly delivered, acceptable, and effective.

Content ideas

Child protection for teachers – free online course



QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY 

Child Protection for Teachers

Feel empowered to protect your students by identifying and reporting signs of child abuse and neglect.

[Go to course](#)

<https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/child-protection-teachers>

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Public health approach

- The Approach is evidence-informed four step process:
 1. **Identify or define the problem:** Normally this step includes data gathering to find out who, what, why, where and when.
 2. **Identify any possible causes:** Factors that put people at risk of being a victim or perpetrator of violence and any factors that may prevent this from happening.
 3. **Develop and evaluate interventions:** Use the data to design, implement and evaluate interventions to prevent crime.
 4. **Scale it up:** If evaluation shows that the intervention works, then it should be scaled up, while continuing to evaluate how well it is addressing the problem, its ongoing acceptability and appropriateness, and and its cost-effectiveness.

Refreshed ACECQA resources

- Child safety reforms and resource updates
 - [NQF Child Safety Guides](#)
 - [National decision tree](#) (interactive tool)
 - [Subscribe to ACECQA Newsletter](#)

Case studies

ABC interactive resource

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-10-19/you-decide-would-you-remove-these-children/8103416>

Bystanders

<https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/aug/08/mother-shakes-child-in-public-do-you-step-in>

RC Case Study 2

<https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/case-studies/case-study-02-ymca-nsw>

ABC Four Corners

<https://iview.abc.net.au/show/four-corners/series/2025/video/NC2503H007S00>

Film

Documentary

- Athlete A
- Don't Tell
- Just a Boy
- The Department
- Polly and Me
- Disclosure
- The Secret: Child Sexual Abuse
- The Children in the Pictures

Feature film

- Mystic River
- Spotlight
- Oranges and Sunshine
- Bad Education
- Primal Fear
- Precious

Key agencies

- National Office for Child Safety
- National Centre for Action on Child Sexual Abuse
- Australian Institute of Family Studies (e.g., <https://aifs.gov.au/resources/resource-sheets/australian-child-protection-legislation>)
- Raising Children Network
- Australian Human Rights Commission
- State and territory children's commissioners and guardians

Support for students

Tips

- Always include a slide dedicated to counselling and support services
- Check immediately before to make sure all links work
- Find comprehensive lists here :
 - [AIFS](#)
 - [eSafety](#)
- Also include direct links to student support services at your institution and consider involving them ahead of time
- Promote helpseeking as a sign of strength.

Questions?



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Extras

INSPIRE: Seven strategies for ending violence against children

1. Implementation and enforcement of laws
2. Norms and values
3. Safe environments
4. Parent and caregiver support
5. Income and economic strengthening
6. Response and support services
7. Education and life skills

Source: Little et al 2026 Interventions to prevent, reduce, and respond to violence against children and adolescents ([Update to the INSPIRE framework](#))

Eight goals - preventing and addressing child sexual abuse in child and youth serving organisations

1. Focus on child wellbeing and safety above all else
2. Make training a cornerstone of CYSO practices
3. Increase the monitoring of adult-child interactions in CYSO programs
4. Collaborate with children and parents
5. Identify safety concerns and generate solutions to specific organizational CSA safety risks
6. Increase CYSO evaluation and accountability
7. Address youth sexual behaviour
8. Strengthen human resource management.

Source: [Letourneau et al 2025 Desk Guide](#)

Six-point plan to restore public trust in the childcare system

1. Putting children's interests first.
2. Funding and governing early childhood education as a vital public good and the foundational stage of Australia's education system.
3. Lifting workforce quality through professional pay, better conditions and rigorous teacher training.
4. Stronger quality controls, including lowering staff-to-child ratios from 1:4 to 1:3 for children under two, ensuring a qualified teacher in every room, and introducing benchmarks to limit the expansion of low-quality for-profit providers and expand public provision of long day care.
5. Greater transparency and accountability, including resourcing regulators to conduct frequent, rigorous and unannounced inspections and to shut down unsafe services when necessary and mandatory public reporting of financial and operational data for all providers.
6. An independent national early childhood commission with the authority to oversee, coordinate and plan the childcare system.

Source: Early Childhood Professorial Advisory Council (ECPAC) via [ABC Online](#)

Structural reforms needed to keep children safe

1. Children's safety is compromised by corporate providers and private equity firms
2. Children's safety is compromised by weaknesses in the National Quality Framework
3. Children's safety is compromised by weak educator to child ratios
4. Children's safety is compromised by inadequate inclusion funding and inclusion workforce funding and models
5. Children's safety is compromised by an inadequately prepared workforce
6. Children's safety is compromised by low wages and poor working conditions
7. Children's safety is compromised by limited access to quality professional development
8. Children's safety is compromised by limited Workforce Diversity
9. Children's safety is compromised by the absence of an independent authority to oversee sector planning that supports quality
10. Children's safety is compromised by parents being treated as consumers, not allies.

Source: Media Release [ECEC Summit 2026](#)